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**Written Testimony Opposing Senate Bill No. 643
and Supporting Senate Bill 628, 68 and 69 and House Bill 6037**

Good evening Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrera and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. I'm Allan P. Hillman, president of the Greater New Haven Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut. I'm here to oppose Senate Bill No. 643, An Act Concerning Citizenship Status Verification Prior to the Issuance of a Driver's License.

The ACLU of Connecticut commends the esteemed members of the committee as well as the senators and representatives who have introduced and sponsored the various bills under discussion tonight for addressing the important issue of immigration status as it applies to driver's licenses and vehicle registration.

In all legislation of this kind, there are two main concerns from a civil liberties perspective. First, any legislation on this topic must treat people in a fair and equitable manner. Avoiding explicit or implicit discrimination is of the utmost importance to the spirit and letter of the Fourteenth Amendment. Even bills that are put forth with the best intentions could potentially be used in an inequitable and discriminatory manner. This leads to the second key point, which is that the complex and shifting nature of immigration law and the immigration statuses of individual people demand that all legislation on this topic be clear and comprehensive.

Senate Bill 634 raises concern on both these points. It would rely on the federal Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements or SAVE program to determine the legal immigration status of any driver's license applicant. That, however, is not what SAVE was intended to do or is capable of doing. It doesn't determine whether an individual is lawfully or unlawfully present in the United States and it contains no records to verify the status of native-born citizens. All it can do is verify, within its limited database, whether documents and/or information provided by an applicant are valid for certain types of immigrant statuses.

This bill would require employees of the state Department of Motor Vehicles or employees of AAA, which also issues licenses, to reach a determination about immigration status that they are not trained or qualified to make, basing it on information in a database that is not appropriate for that purpose. This would inevitably lead to mistakes. In the complex world of immigration law, many people are not legal

or illegal but are involved in complex processes that can lead to legal residency, citizenship or deportation. Asking DMV and AAA employees to interpret this information and decide the status of an applicant would not only risk unfair and unwarranted denials but would force those employees to carry out the federal mandate of immigration control.

We are deeply concerned that this inappropriate screening with ambiguous data could easily lead to ethnic profiling. Citizens of certain ethnic groups would inevitably be subjected to extra scrutiny and to biased misinterpretations of the data, creating a new barrier or separate standard for an entire class of people. Immigrants whose status would allow them to apply for licenses would be scared away.

This issue is profoundly and inextricably tied to public safety. Car ownership and/or operation are necessary and nearly universal for working people in Connecticut. It can be assumed that many individuals who are denied licenses because of their immigration status must drive in order to work and are doing so whether or not they have a license. It's clearly in the best interest of the state to ensure that these drivers can be licensed and insured for the safety and benefit of the entire state.

For that reason, we support Senate Bill 628, An Act Concerning the Issuance of Drivers' Licenses to Certain Immigrants, which expands the Department of Motor Vehicles' ability to issue driver's licenses in a logical and comprehensive manner to individuals of all immigration statuses. We also support Senate Bill 69, An Act Allowing Any Person Accepted into the Federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program to Obtain a Motor Vehicle Operator's License, which would grant any individual in that program the opportunity to obtain a driver's license. It's worth noting that 47 other states permit driver's licenses for people with deferred action status. And we support Senate Bill 68, An Act Establishing a Program Allowing Certain State Residents to Obtain a Driver's License or Vehicle Registration Regardless of Citizenship or Immigration Status, as well as House Bill 6037, An Act Concerning the Issuance of a Motor Vehicle Operator's License to Certain Immigrants, both of which allow those with various immigration statuses to register vehicles.

Thank you very kindly for your attention this evening.